

A PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL VIEW OF SELF-REALIZATION AS AN ESSENTIAL FACET OF BECOMING ADULT*

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1. Introduction

It is acknowledged that the aim of educating a child is his/her becoming adult, since he/she cannot and ought not to permanently remain a not-yet-adult child. As an educand**, a child is committed to the educative support of an adult. However, this does not mean he/she has little or no role in his/her own becoming adult. On the contrary, the interpretation, acceptance or rejection, and application of educative content which the educator presents to and unlocks for him/her *requires* his/her active participation. Thus, he/she is a partner in an adult's educative activities and, hence, in his/her becoming adult. According to Langeveld, this partnership is attributable to a child being someone who wants to be someone *him/herself*. Also, Perquin emphasizes a child's *own* role in becoming adult when he refers to the meaninglessness of pedagogic intervention which does not consider that a child must also arrive at a personal position in his/her involvement with reality. ^(7: 61) Sonnekus links up with this when he indicates that a child reserves all rights with respect to his/her becoming adult. ^(10, 10)

Thus, two distinguishable but inseparable facets or moments of a child's becoming adult are indicated. There is the accompaniment (guidance) by an adult (an adult's role in a child's becoming adult), *and* the self-realization of an educand (a child's own role in becoming adult).

2. A more specific description of self-realization

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** "Educand" refers to a human child who not only can but **must** be educated (GDY).

An analysis of the concept “self-realization” shows two parts, i.e., “self” and “realization”. Firstly, viewed in its essence, the concept *self* refers to somebody, a person, an I, an individual invested with authentic human qualities by which his/her uniqueness makes him/her distinguishable from other human beings. This uniqueness is embodied in a person’s person-structure, which is a totality-structure of somatic-psychic-spiritual qualities. Also, the meaning attributed to the concept “self” is that of *unique* involvement, *unique* participation, *unique* initiative. Here, the emphasis is on his/her *unique* participation or role, in contrast to the participation or role of another person(s). Thus, there is an indication of an active involvement and the *self*-exercise of choice.

Secondly, realization, as a concept, refers to a dynamic activity and the actualization of an activity. Thus, here is evidence of making real or fulfilling givens, possibilities, and potentialities. In this connection, realization does not imply bringing “something” about from “nothing,” but the unfolding or becoming knowable of what is latent.

As a unitary concept, self-realization of a person includes making qualities real which give content to the individuality of a “self”. Viewed in this light, self-realization implies the unfolding or fulfillment of human potentialities. Hence, it is an activity which refers to an individual, *unique* involvement and, thus, an active involvement is a necessity.

3. The relation between self-realization and becoming adult

With special reference to a child, unfolding or fulfilling human potentialities refer to the course of an educand’s becoming adult. Viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective, self-realization is an unfolding of psychic-spiritual potentialities. These are potentialities with which a child has an undeniable role. Thus, his/her self-realization is equated to the unfolding of his/her personal potentialities in giving form to his/her unique person-structure (personality). The *unique* role of a child in this is that he/she exercises a decisive choice in the various educative and formative situations in which he/she finds him/herself. Choices which he/she

exercises in this connection are definitive for the harmonious course of his/her self-realization, as well as, simultaneously, with the successful course of his/her becoming adult.

Confirmation of the affinity between self-realization and becoming adult also is provided by Landman.^(2: 33) This confirmation is found in a structural analysis of becoming which he explicates. Although he uses the word becoming, he means becoming adult, as is evident in his assertion that becoming includes *becoming different and, indeed, in the direction of adulthood.*

Self-realization is tantamount to becoming adult (becoming) for Landman when he offers the explanation that a child's relationship with the world is characterized by a continual elevation in dialogue, which gradually increases so that it occurs as does that of an adult. Thus, a child becomes through the dialogue he/she carries out, but only when he/she is pedagogically supported to that end. By pedagogically supporting a child, the level of dialogue he/she carries out and/or the relationships he/she establishes are elevated. This implies that becoming is an elevation in level of dialogue.

Moreover, Landman alleges that a child attributes meaning to his/her relationships with things and fellow persons. To attain adulthood, he/she must increasingly give meaning to the world as an adult ought to and, therefore, becoming also refers to an elevation in the level of giving meaning.

It is expected of an adult that he/she must him/herself can responsibly make a choice and come to a decision. Therefore, a pedagogical demand placed on a child who is becoming adult is that he/she increasingly makes choices on his/her own initiative. Landman also qualifies becoming as an elevation in choosing.

In a dialogue a child carries out, the meanings he/she attributes to something, to someone, and to situations, as well as the choices he/she makes, he/she is continually an initiator of activity. In each case, this *self*-involvement is conspicuous. Thus, a child's self-realization includes an elevation in the level of dialogue, giving meaning, and choosing.

However, a child cannot arrive at self-realization merely by exercising self-choosing, self-deciding, and self-judging without complying with the accountable helping guidance an adult offers him/her. Thus, e.g., a child can reject the values and norms presented and, during his/her choosing and judging, allow him/herself to be guided by sensory and vital values, i.e., those values which offer him/her immediate and temporary guidelines, as well as physical gratification. However, such a child remains vitally bound in his/her dialogue with surrounding reality and does not arrive at an elevation in level of dialogue, meaning, and choice, because he/she does not progressively fulfill the demands of propriety which are placed on him/her. According to Landman, ^(2: 34) here there is no becoming (becoming adult) but, at most, growth. Regarding a child's psychic-spiritual potentialities, there is no increase in level of his/her actualization, and he/she does not arrive at adulthood-directed self-realization. Indeed, he/she becomes different, but such a change is degenerative (negative "becoming").

4. Ways of self-realization

4.1 *Introduction*

A person is continually in relationships with the reality surrounding him/her. Such relationships are between a person and him/herself, persons, things around him/her and, for a Christian believer, between person and God. It is within these relationships that a child's self-realization is actualized by modes or ways of self-realization.

4.2 *Self-realization through experiencing and lived experiencing*

4.2.1 *Self-realization through experiencing.*

Viewed from an accountable psychopedagogical perspective, experiencing is an original, continuous, and directed activity which is recognized by a self-concerned reaching the reality surrounding him/her. ^(11: 8; 12: 108) Such a directedness to and involvement with reality eventually result in acquiring experiential *knowledge*. It is conspicuous that, in the linguistic explication of the word "experience", *conquering/mastering knowledge by means of*

learning are accentuated. ^(1: 158) Although experiencing implies a totality involvement and, thus, a bodily and emotional involvement, the cognitive directedness of an experiencing person is especially required.

With reference to, and linking up with Sonnekus' ^(11: 8-9) and Ferreira's ^(12:112-115) findings, the following are distinguished as essential characteristics of experiencing:

- a) Experiencing is not a passive event but is a self-involved being engaged with reality;
- b) Experiencing is an orienting activity characterized by a time-space localization and a qualitative evaluation of what is experienced;
- c) In all experiencing, there is evidence of intuitive knowing or a pre-cognitive knowing on a sensing level, which contains the possibility of proceeding to a cognitively directed knowing;
- d) Experiencing implies anticipating or assuming what is not evident in the experienced;
- e) Experiencing is an activity;
- f) Experiencing is an essential component [Or moment) of lived experiencing.

4.2.2 *Self-realization through lived experiencing*

Viewed from a psychopedagogical perspective, the involvement of a child with reality can also be explicated in terms of an active being aware of reality, as an intentional directedness, and as an activity of receiving meaning, giving meaning, and taking a position. Sonnekus has summarized this unitary event with the concept lived experiencing, which he describes as "... the intentionally determined, subjective, personal (pathic-normative) taking a position by a person (the self)• as a totality-in-communication with reality."^(9: 23) Pretorius expands on this description by describing lived experiencing as "... the personal (pathic-gnostic-normative) intentional (meaning giving, meaning receiving, taking a position), continuous activity of being-aware of reality."^(8: 8)

• Inserted by the author.

With reference to Landman, this active involvement of an individual (self) is elucidated by Pretorius as follows: “All lived experiencing is lived experiencing of self, and this fact contributes to the meaning of the lived experiencing. In other words, lived experiencing belongs to the unity of the Self ...” (8: 6)

From the following essential characteristics of lived experiencing, especially as particularized by Sonnekus^(11: 12), self-realization by a child is actualized by means of lived experiencing:

- a) Lived experiencing is an act of intentionality directed to life reality. Such intentional directedness is characterized by seeking and giving meaning, which gives lived experiencing a normative character;
- b) Lived experiencing has an emotional (pathic-affective) as well as an illuminative or knowing (gnostic-cognitive) side, which are distinguishable but not separable;
- c) Lived experiencing shows a unitary character. Pretorius^(8: 38), in reference to Linschoten, says the unity of consciousness is that all psychic phenomena actualized together (e.g., seeing, hearing, imagining, judging, deciding, loving, hating, and desiring) belong, as part phenomena, to a single unity. In addition, lived experiencing is not actualized via these separate functions;
- d) Because of its nature of searching for and giving meaning, lived experiencing is always directed to something, i.e., to content of life reality;
- e) Lived experiencing is not a momentary but a continuous event;
- f) Each lived experiencing is subject- and person-bound and is I-defining, since each lived experiencing includes giving sense and meaning *by* and *for* the one who lived experiences;
- g) Lived experiencing reality is continually actualized differently which, for an individual, then involves receiving and giving meaning differently in each situation. Hence, this is the importance of lived experiencing as a way of self-realization (way of becoming and/or degenerating);
- h) Lived experiencing is an essential component of experiencing.

4.2.3 The connection between experiencing and lived experiencing, and what that connection has to do with the child's self-realization.

A structural analysis of experiencing and lived experiencing shows that they are closely connected. Viewed in its essence, experiencing is a turning (directedness) to reality, i.e., it is primarily on a sensing level and is precognitive. However, experiencing without giving meaning is unthinkable. Such giving sense or meaning is a subjective (person-bound) matter since this appropriation of reality by an experiencing person is meaningful for him/her. In addition, it is an event which, to complete or round off the activity of experiencing, must serve to make the experiential content knowable (a cognitive activity). According to Van der Stoep, ^(14: 118) the implicit sense of things experienced must be made explicit by giving subjective meaning to it by lived experiencing it.

Since lived experiencing is essentially a meaning receiving and attributing activity regarding something experienced, it is a finalizing of experiencing. According to Ferreira, ^(112: 118) lived experiencing is the meaningful rounding off (completing, finalizing), refining of and giving a deeper meaning to the experienced content. Hence, experiencing gives rise to lived experiencing, but the experienced content given meaning by lived experiencing also has relevance for future experiencing. Thus, a child experiences while lived experiencing and lived experiences while experiencing. Regarding their relationship, they co-influence and co-determine each other.

From these descriptions, each experience and its correlated lived experience includes the acquisition of experiential and lived experiential knowledge. Each involves a quantitative and qualitative increase or deepening of possessed knowledge (i.e., possessed experience) and brings about change. This change also holds true for the formation of the structure of a person (personality) who experiences and lived experiences. Thus, this also holds true for their *self*-realization. Factually, each experience and lived experience does not necessarily include a positive value for forming a person structure of one becoming

adult—which underlines the necessity for educating a child. The acquisition of experience, and the correlated lived experience, specifically when actualized outside an educative situation, do not necessarily lead to becoming, but degeneration can also result. Further, lived experiencing and experiencing something in the presence of an adult is no guarantee that a child will become adult because it is possible that he/she can degenerate. The above implies that each meaning giving activity during a child’s experiencing while lived experiencing, and lived experiencing while experiencing life reality only leads to becoming if it is actualized in terms of pedagogically accountable value structures.

4.3 Self-realization through exercising willing

4.3.1 Introductory remarks

With reference to his exploration of the psychological literature regarding a person’s volitional life, Garbers distinguishes three schools of thought. ^(5: 412) According to him, there are:

- a) those who attribute such breadth to willing that it includes every human striving;
- b) those who view willing as the result of various opposing strivings, and;
- c) those who see in willing a type of striving which cannot be reduced to one or more other strivings.

In his view of a person’s volitional life, Garbers agrees with the last group of thinkers. This discussion borrows liberally from Garber’s views.

Considering the complexity of a person’s volitional life, a concise explication of what is meant by exercising willing is no small task. Nel ^(4: 52) arrives at such a summary of a person’s volitional life when he says that the intentional directedness of a human being to reality is known through a person’s intentionalized, or concerned-going-out to the world around him/her. According to him, there is a “will” or a propelling power present during a person’s entire life to go out to the world.

The volitional life of a person is closely related to an individual's level of becoming and, thus, to the developmental state of his/her somatic and psychic-spiritual personal potentialities. Qualitatively, the intentionalized going out to the world of a toddler, elementary school child, puber, adolescent, and adult always show relative differences. As such, these differences are an indication of the degree of self-realization. In this connection, Nel asserts, "At the beginning of a child's life, this intentionalized going out to the world is on a vital level: It is a vital striving for nourishment, for physical or sensory contact, etc. To the extent that a child, as possibility, is activated from his spirituality and his 'I' or personal core comes into action, his intentionalizing develops on a spiritual level by which spiritually willed activities, choices, and decisions arise." (4: 52)

4.3.2 *A structural analysis of volitional life*

With reference to Langeveld^(3: 177) and Garbers,^(5: 412 et seq.) the following inseparable moments (facets) of volitional life are distinguished:

a) The moment of striving

Regarding this moment of striving, Garbers refers to motives, driving powers (see Nel), or propelling forces at the foundation of a person's behaving. In this connection, he distinguishes among reflexes, instincts, vital motives, and emotions which are grouped within the vital sphere of being a person. In addition, social strivings, human or absolute, or value strivings are mentioned, as well as emotions belonging within a psychic-spiritual sphere of being human. These driving powers are closely entwined with a person's desires, wants, and needs, as well as his/her life aims which, in their turn, are strongly influenced by a person's cultural milieu.

Thus, it is understandable that a child who, in his/her life conduct, primarily allows him/herself to be directed by vital driving forces will not gradually appropriate supra-personal values (a precondition for full-fledged adulthood). Thus, being stuck in the vital sphere of

being human greatly determines a one-sided, and narrow foundation regarding that youth's behaviors, and his/her corresponding value judgments. Hence, he/she cannot arrive at an adequate self-realization.

b) The moment of choosing

The fact that a person must choose because of the presence of various strivings also is emphasized by Oberholzer ^(6: 181) when he says that exercising willing implies that a person also can "say no" to whether a personal aim is realized. Thus, his/her choice is the basis of subsequent actions. According to Garbers, ^(5: 418) typical events characterizing this moment are weighing possibilities and hesitating while deciding what striving has higher value and which, thus, acquires preference.

Above it is said that self-realization (directed to adulthood) implies an elevation in choice; hence, any choice which increases an accountable becoming adult, such as an accountable adult willing, ought to be made. Repeated acts of willing, supported by a continual preference for vital strivings, has little pedagogical meaning for anyone becoming adult. A youth who finds him/herself in a situation in which he/she must decide *for* or *against* societal norms, lived experiences a moment of crisis in his/her becoming adult, since the quality of his/her value preferences, enmeshed in his/her strivings, determine the pedagogical acceptability of his/her choices and actions. Because of the accompanying/guiding function the emotions play regarding the differentiated strivings, that child whose emotional life is labilized by pedagogical neglect can much more easily make a choice which is in opposition to societal norms than that child whose emotional life shows a higher degree of stability. Guidance in making choices, therefore, is an indispensable facet of any reorientation program for a child who manifests anomalous behaviors.

c) The moment of deciding

According to Garbers, the moment of deciding implies that the aim included in the striving, with respect to the specific behavior, is

accepted, rejected, or delayed.^(5: 418) The choice is finalized by a decision. What is now aimed at, by deciding, gives direction to the person's concerned behaviors and, in essence, this amounts to *self-realization*. According to Garbers,^(5: 419) when a decision cannot be carried out immediately, or when its realization is a long-term matter, it becomes a plan.

Hence, an act of deciding is a normative event, and assumes that the person who must decide allows him/herself to be led by the demands of propriety which address him/her from his/her life milieu. Deciding is a way of self-realizing, because the final decision must be made on one's own initiative.

Responsibility in decision-making is a matter which is actual, especially since the person who decides must be accountable for his/her decision. In this regard, responsibility is emphasized, and accountable deciding is a criterion for adulthood. This latter is underlined emphatically by Landman when he states that an adult is someone who can remain faithful to the most extreme consequences of his/her decisions.^(2: 36)

Indecisiveness, however, is a problem which many persons must deal with. Such persons often act with difficulty, or not at all. With reference to Lersch, Van der Merwe^(12: 45) presents the following explanations of the phenomenon of indecisiveness:

- (i) It is attributed to conflicting strivings, where a person must choose among various possibilities, while finding it difficult to abandon others;
- (ii) Sometimes, this is based on a fear of accepting responsibility, and risking making a decision;
- (iii) A labilized emotional life undermines and weakens a person's "willpower," and restrains him/her from deciding.

There is a fundamental and meaningful difference between indecisiveness and a lack of independence. Where indecisiveness refers to an impotence to purposefully choose between possibilities, a lack of independence implies that a person does not exercise an act of willing because someone else prescribes to him/her.^(12: 145)

4.3.3 Some essential characteristics of a person's volitional life, with special reference to the phenomenon of self-realization

For a summary of these explications of the structure of volitional life, the following essential characteristics are distinguished with reference to Sonnekus,⁽¹¹⁾ Garbers,⁽⁵⁾ and Van der Merwe⁽¹³⁾:

- (i) Volitional life is characterized by self-initiative, or taking a personal initiative;
- (ii) Exercising willing is directed to realizing an aim;
- (iii) Willing serves a direction-finding and integrating function regarding a person's strivings;
- (iv) A person's volitional life is directed to the future;
- (v) Willing is decisive;
- (vi) Willing is decisive in a person's aim-directed actions;
- (vii) A person's willing is inextricably interwoven with both his/her cognitive and emotional life;
- (viii) The exercise of willing in its relation to experiencing and lived experiencing is a way in which a person (particularly a child) arrives at self-realization;
- (ix) Exercising willing implies a verification of a person's wanting to become a person in his/her own right and, from a psychopedagogical perspective, implies that a child increasingly affirms his/her own identity by becoming a person.

4.3.4 Relationships between willing, experiencing, and lived experiencing

Regarding the relationship between willing and experiencing, as well as between willing and lived experiencing, Van der Merwe^(13: 82-88) indicates that especially the initiating and direction-giving functions of willing deserve mention. With reference to the emotional side of a person's lived experiencing, the level on which such emotional lived experiencing is actualized determines the quality (nature) of the act of willing, and there then is mention of "will-power".^(5: 425) For example, a child with a labilized emotional life finds it difficult to take a rational (cognitive/abstract) attitude and his/her acts of willing, which flow from this, are mostly

actualized on a sensing level. During the discussion of the moments of choosing and deciding of volitional life, the close connection among emotional (pathic, affective), knowing (gnostic, cognitive) lived experiencing, and willing are indicated. This is why the quality of “willpower” is an expression of, among other things, the relationship between a person’s knowing directedness and his/her willing. For example, during his/her experiencing and lived experiencing involvement with such a situation, a person can distance him/herself, consider several possible choices, and eventually decide accountably and responsibly. From this, it seems that, although the emotional life still largely determines the quality of the act of willing, it remains under the strong control of cognitive directedness. In addition, it is true that a person is not abandoned to emotional lived experiencing (and deciding) but, through willful effort, he/she can decide based on a cognitive judgment.

5. Conclusion

In this article, the concept of self-realization is closely elucidated, and special attention is given to some of the ways of self-realization, among which are experiencing, lived experiencing, and exercising willing. However, the question arises about how the self-realization of a child or individual is knowable. This is a question about the form(s) it takes. That these forms of self-realization are related to a person’s personal qualities (so-called personality traits) is evident. In the psychological literature, a great deal of attention is given to this matter, while contemporary psychopedagogical views reflect a renewed interest of pedagogicians in it.

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